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Housekeeper's Chat

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U. S. Department of Agriculture
Wednesday, December 3, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: Planning Houses for Children to Live in. "From a talk by James S. Taylor, Division of Building and Housing, Bureau of Standards, Department of Commerce. Menu for children.

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Saturday morning was rainy. I came home from market and found a curious looking structure in the middle of the living-room floor. It appeared to consist of all the dining-room chairs and most of those that belonged in the living-room. They were tipped over on their front edges in a circle, and roofed over with a large plaid automobile robe, evidently taken from my cedar chest.

Strange noises issued from within.

"Billy!" I called. "Are you there?" I must have sounded like an Englishman answering the telephone. That's what they say instead of "Hello!" "Are you there?" "Billy, what on earth does this mean?"

"Yes'm" said Billy, crawling out between two chairs. He always says "Yes'm" when he has an explanation to make. "It's a blockhouse," he explained. "We're hiding from the Indians. Tom and Jack are inside. Tom wants to have it a store next, and Jack thinks a railroad station would be better. Er- you don't mind our using your chairs, do you, Aunt Sammy?" he added as an afterthought. "We didn't know where else to go, or what else we could use."

Now as a matter of fact, Billy has a room of his own. But it isn't very large, and it certainly would not have accommodated the fort-no, blockhouse- before us. Naturally I didn't much relish having my nice orderly living-room all torn up like that. But boys do have strange inspirations for their play, and what's a house for if they can't live their way in it, just as we live our way?

So I said, "I don't mind, Billy, if you don't damage the chairs, and if you'll put them where you got them when the game is over. And how would you like to ask Tom and Jack to stay to lunch with you today? We'll have orangeade and you boys can help to make it and set the table."



You'd be surprised how quickly those dining-room chairs were back in place. Billy loves to make orangeade, and I always let him do it, if I can. He was quite proud of his skill, and quite envied by the other boys. When he set the table he got all the knives on the left and forks on the right, but that was a small matter.

Before I tell you what I gave the boys to eat, I want to read you some extracts from a talk on planning a home with the child in mind. If I had heard it several years ago, Billy wouldn't have had to play block-house in the living-room, because he would have had many more suitable playthings and occupations and parts of the house where they could be indulged in without detriment to my things.

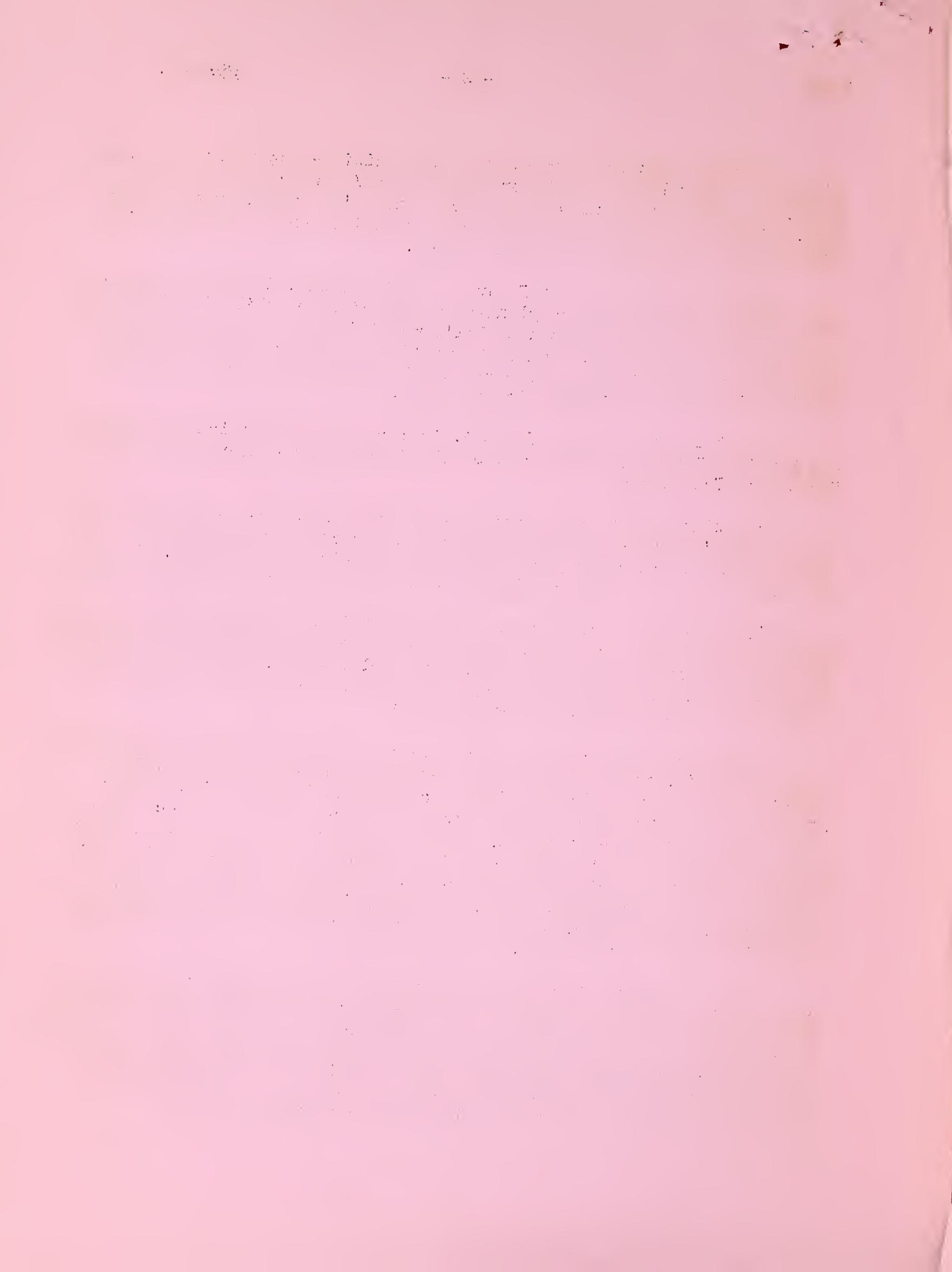
The talk was given by James S. Taylor, of the Division of Building and Housing, Bureau of Standards, at the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.

"In planning the house with the children in mind.....we must think of the child's health and his dependence on fresh air and sunlight, and on cleanliness, and about protecting him from fire and accident. We must put ourselves in the child's place and see our home as the child sees it....

"A colleague of mine once suggested that in order to get the child's point of view, one might crawl into the house on one's hands and knees and see what the bottoms of shelves and high tables look like, how chairs and tables break up the view of a room, and how ill suited most articles of furniture and equipment are to a toddler."

Suggestions are made about providing enough open space around each home to make its rooms bright and cheerful, and having homes on quiet streets where there is little through automobile traffic. Mr. Taylor speaks of the importance of having plenty of fresh air and direct sunshine that has not been filtered through ordinary window glass. Another point is seeing that the house is not too damp at any time, nor the air too dry when it is heated in winter-time. Parents should arrange, he thinks, as far as possible, that the children's sleep shall be quiet and undisturbed. This means, of course, separate rooms, at a distance from the living parts of the house.

Then he says: "You may be prompted to ask yourself whether or not your home is so neat and attractive looking as to encourage your children to be orderly and take a pride in its appearance. You want them to develop orderly habits. Do you set aside a room or space in which they can play and do you provide them convenient space in which they can keep their toys and their clothes and their out-door wraps? Do you make your yard attractive for them so that they will be glad to play at home?



"Could you easily get them out of the house in case a fire should start, and are the chimneys, stoves, and heating apparatus in good repair and so installed that they are not likely to become a source of fire? Are your children properly protected against burns and scaldings when they come into the kitchen? If your house is not equipped with running water and modern sanitary plumbing fixtures, is there any way in which you could reasonably have them installed. Or have you provided the most convenient and most sanitary substitute that you can afford? Do you keep the house painted and in good repair?"

He shows how furnishings affect both manners and health, when he says:

"You want your children to have good table manners. Do you provide them with chairs that are high enough to enable them to eat properly? Bathroom facilities that enable a child to wash his hands and face from a convenient position are a great help in teaching him to keep himself clean." I imagine he is thinking that if the wash-basin and other plumbing fixtures cannot be set at a suitable height for the little ones, then some sort of platform or box should be provided to raise them to the right level.

He continues: "How about the lighting where the child does his school work? Do unshaded lights shine directly in his eyes? If they do, eyestrain may have a lot to do with his temper and disposition. "Billy has a reading light right beside his desk, and I find it's a great help in getting lessons done properly."

For luncheon I gave the boys several of Billy's favorite dishes. Here's the whole menu: Broiled Liver; Baked Potatoes; Stewed Tomatoes; and Baked Custard. The recipe for the Baked Custard is in the Leaflet "Eggs at Any Meal". I believe many of you have sent for it already, but if you haven't, lose no time, for it is a very popular leaflet.

In cooking the liver, I parboiled it first, in slices about half an inch thick. That is, I placed it in boiling water over a low flame for one minute, and then removed it. After sprinkling each slice on both sides with salt and pepper, I dipped them in melted butter, and broiled them under a low flame for about five minutes. I happened to buy beef liver, but any kind of liver can be cooked this way.

When I want fried liver, I parboil it first in the same way, and dip in flour instead of melted butter before frying.

Liver, like any hot meat, should be served promptly after cooking, on a hot platter. I put some more melted butter on it at serving time.

I'll check over the children's luncheon menu: Broiled liver; Baked Potatoes; Stewed Tomatoes; and Baked Custard. The orangeade that Billy made, was, of course, a little extra treat.

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Thursday: "The Metamorphosis of a Parlor."

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